

Editor's Notebook



Mark Newhall
Editor &
Publisher

Deere Rotaries - A Few Months Later

We recently heard from Thomas Langan, Alma Center, Wis., the man who gave us an early "sneak peak" at Deere's new rotary combine before it was officially introduced (Vol. 23, No. 4). I asked him what he thinks of the new machines now.

"A fellow not too far from here bought a 9650 STS this fall. From what I've been able to gather, it sounds like they have a lot of capacity and grain quality is good as long as they are kept running at full capacity. However, if you don't keep them full, they will grind corn. I've also heard there's some trouble with plugging between the discharge beater and straw chopper in damp or green soybeans and apparently, the rock trap misses a lot of rocks, which can cause major damage. I heard that it takes about 6 hours to pull the rotor out. You have to take off the feederhouse, and all the tines need to be taken out so the rear half of the rotor will fit through the front half of the cage since the cage is smaller in diameter in front. The process is reversed to put it back in. So if a rock runs through and tears stuff up, you're looking at about 12 hours just to remove and replace the rotor - not including fixing the rotor itself.

"One other thing I don't like is that they have different concaves - one for corn, one for milo and beans, and one for small grain. We change our Gleaner from corn to soybeans and back on average of at least three times every fall as the weather changes. Deere claims it takes an hour to change concaves. We can change our entire machine, including heads, from one crop to another in half that time.

"As for the cleaning system, they have eliminated the double outlet cleaning fan with the upper precleaning air blast that the conventionals use. This, in my opinion, is a step backward. There has also been some concern that the shoe will be too small for side slopes due to the fact that they are built on the same frame as the class V combines."

How About A Casket That Reflects Your Profession

Here's an idea we recently spotted in the British magazine Farmer's Weekly. Writer Wendy Jones made an interesting proposal: Why be buried in an ordinary square casket when you could be buried in a custom-built box that tells people something about you?

She got the idea in Ghana, Africa, where people are generally buried in a casket that symbolizes their profession. For example, a teacher might be buried inside a giant pencil, a baker in a loaf of bread, a taxi driver in a taxi and a preacher in a big Bible-shaped box.



Jones suggested that farmers might want to pick up on the custom. If you grow corn, you could meet your maker in a big ear of corn. If you raise chickens, maybe

a chicken-shaped casket is for you. Or maybe you have a pickup that is particularly beloved. Why not have a casket made to resemble it?

In Ghana, coffin craftsmen set up stalls near churches. Their colorful caskets are made out of lightweight wood, painted in bright colors. You can buy all kinds of ready-made boxes, or order one in advance.

First Fendt Tractor Sold

An Agco dealer from Ohio called just before press time to say he was preparing to deliver the first Fendt Vario tractor sold in the U.S. Agco bought the German tractor maker Fendt a couple years ago. Fendt is considered by many to be the "Cadillac" of tractors because of their high quality and top-of-the-line features.

The Fendt 926 was bought by Junior Liebrecht, Continental, Ohio. Liebrecht runs a farm operation and also manufactures a "giant wheel ditcher" and a tractor-pulled tire plow, both of which have been featured in FARM SHOW (for more information, contact: Liebrecht Mfg., 17771 Rd. H-13, Continental, Ohio 45831 ph 419-596-3501).

When we talked to Junior in early January, he had only had the tractor a few days. The day we talked he had just finished using the tractor to pull his big ditcher.

"What I really like about the tractor is the Vario variable speed transmission," says Liebrecht. "It lets us go slower than we could with any other tractor on the market. You can gear it down as slow as 60 ft. per hour. At that speed, you can hardly even tell the tractor is moving. When you change speeds, there are no jerks at all. In fact, this tractor shifts smoother than a luxury car. The slow speed is important when doing trenching or tiling work. The slowest speed our other tractors can go is 12 ft. per minute, even in creeper drive.

"On the other hand, the tractor's top highway speed is 31 mph. It's rated at 245 pto horsepower and almost 300 engine horsepower. However, when we checked it on a dynamometer, it checked out at about 270 pto horsepower. It's equipped with 46-in. high rear tires and big 34-in. front tires."

Liebrecht says the tractor is more expensive than other tractors in its class but notes that the Vario transmission and fuel efficient engine make it worth the extra cost.



Liebrecht's Fendt tractor arrived by trailer in late December.

Aging Dams Need Attention

The following comments were made by Pearl S. Reed, chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service at the USDA, in an article in Resource Magazine. Reed advocates greater public spending on dams:

"In my nearly 30-year career at the USDA, I have never been as concerned about a public safety issue as I am with the growing problems of aging upstream flood control dams.

"Local communities, with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS), have constructed more than 10,000 upstream flood control dams since 1948. Many of these small dams are at, or soon will reach, the end of their design life. Many have significant rehabilitation needs. Some pose a threat to those downstream or who use their reservoirs as a drinking water source. Other dams could create adverse environmental impacts in the same downstream floodplain they have been protecting."

Challenge To General Mills: Put A Farmer On Your Wheaties Box

Paul Harvey recently reported that Tiger Woods gets 10 cents per box of Wheaties sold with his picture on it but that farmers get just 5 cents for the wheat it took to produce the box of flakes.

A FARM SHOW reader called us soon after that report to say he'd like to challenge General Mills - the maker of Wheaties - to put a farmer on the cover of a box. "And it would be nice if they'd pay him the same share they give Tiger Woods," he said.

Sales of Large Equipment Plummet

Sales of combines and large 4-WD tractors plummeted in 1999. According to figures from the Equipment Manufacturers Institute, sales of self-propelled combines were nearly 50 percent less in 1999 compared to 1998. Through the end of November, 4,843 combines were sold. In 1998, 9,517 combines were sold during the same period. If you look just at the month of November, 1,661 combines were sold in 1998 while just 564 were sold in November, 1999 - a drop of 66 percent.

As for 4-WD tractors over 100 hp., sales through November dropped 27 percent in 1999 as compared to 1998.

At the other end of the scale, sales of under-40 hp. tractors rose 25 percent through November, 1999.

Change Creates Opportunity

Deere wants to turn the latest industry merger into an opportunity for increased market share. "With the most recent announcement that has been made with Fiat buying Case, we are using this as an opportunity to grow our business even further," explains Bud Porter, senior vice president, North American Agricultural Marketing Division.

"We spent quite a bit of our time with dealers and salespeople sharing with them the strategy of how we are going to take advantage of this one-time opportunity," says Porter. "It's relationship selling. We're taking advantage of our position.

"We are the only company that is the same as we were 163 years ago," claims Porter. (Farm Equipment Magazine)

Father Of The Diesel Engine

Rudolf Diesel (1858-1913) was a German engineer whose goal was to come up with an engine that would improve on the efficiency of steam and gasoline engines. He invented the idea of using highly compressed, high temperature air to ignite fuel and, in 1892, obtained a German development patent. By 1897, his engine was a commercial success, bringing him honors and wealth.

The first diesel engine for commercial service was built in the U.S. in 1898 for use at a brewing company. Within a few years, thousands of diesel engines were in use in many industries throughout the U.S. and Europe.

Long-Lasting Batteries

A new generation of batteries may be on the horizon. They last 50 percent longer than today's batteries because of a "super iron" component that promises to be easy and affordable to manufacture. Researchers at the Israeli Institute of Technology, where the new batteries were invented, say they could run flashlights, radios and any other battery-powered devices.

The batteries look the same as conventional alkaline batteries. The differences lie within. Scientists used an unusual form of iron that was long thought to be too unstable for batteries. Normally, when the metal comes into contact with liquids, it dissolves into rust in minutes. But scientists discovered - to their surprise - that caustic solution in batteries actually stabilizes the iron so it decays more slowly than conventional metals. As a result, the new batteries have 50 percent more energy than traditional ones. (AP)

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

The Universal Prayer

So far today, God, I've done all right.

I haven't gossiped.

I haven't lost my temper.

I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, or self-centered.

I'm really glad about that.

But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to need a lot of help. Because in a few minutes . . . I'm going to get out of bed!